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Canadian Drought Destroys Ducks

An official news release, dated July 16, 1936, distributed by the Canadian Government through its Minister of Interior, contains the following information:

"High temperatures with lack of rain during the past two weeks in the Prairie Provinces of Canada, where most of the North American ducks nest, have very seriously affected this year's wild duck crop. . . . It seems as though drought will once more work havoc with the wild duck crop of Canada.

"The Chief Federal Migratory Bird Officer of the Department of the Interior for the Prairie Provinces has just reported by telegram, from Regina, as follows:

"'Duck breeding conditions much worse than expected, based on over three thousand miles of travel and personal observation. Consider conditions serious, in some parts more so than last year. Thousands of potholes and sloughs dry, together with many lakes. No ducks Chaplin Lake, Cabri Lake, Bigstick Lake. Crane Lake dry, or on verge, and many others. Frequently traveled several hundred miles with only a few waterfowl noted. To my mind serious outlook from Battleford, Saskatoon southward. Rarely an encouraging concentration except at wide intervals such as at north end Last Mountain and Waterhen Lakes.'

"Failure of the duck crop in the drought section of the Prairie nesting grounds affects duck hunters in part of Eastern Canada, because some kinds of western-bred ducks such as canvas-backs and redheads migrate during the fall through Ontario and southeastern Quebec to their wintering grounds along the Atlantic coast. The decrease is also of major importance in depleting the supply of the continent as a whole."

"Thus we see," said John H. Baker, Executive Director of the National Association of Audubon Societies, "that the drastic adverse effect of the drought on this year's crop of young ducks not only applies to the principal breeding grounds within the United States, but extends into the heart of the duck-nesting area in the Prairie Provinces of Canada. Under these circumstances, there would appear to be no justification for any open season whatever on ducks this fall of 1936."



Open Season Granted

The granting of an open season on wild waterfowl this fall, announced today, August 15th, by Federal authorities, was cited by John H. Baker as pathetic indication of political pressure on those biologists charged with responsibility for the preservation of this great natural resource.

"When a biological entity like the wild duck is the innocent bystander in the great American game of politics, it's no joke. Once the waterfowl are gone, no power on earth can bring them back.

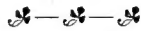
"Yet once more the pitiful remnant of waterfowl that formerly swept down the sky in untold millions is to be raked with shot from the northernmost settlements of white men to the southernmost limits of the birds' winter range.

"This in the face of searing drought in the ducks' principal breeding grounds in the prairie states of this country and Canada, with consequent devastating effect on the crop of young ducks.

"The Federal Government has rushed to alleviate the distress of farmers and domestic livestock, but not that of our natural resources.

"Disregard of future consequences has marked our treatment of America's natural resources from inception of the white man's expansion across the continent. Within the last forty years, especially, the invading white man has interfered with the nesting and feeding of waterfowl by drainage, plowing, grazing and fires; he has pushed the birds to the brink of extermination. With hundreds of thousands of shotguns, he has given them a shove.

"Many duck hunters have sold themselves the notion that 'once a closed season, never an open one.' The Audubon Association has not advocated, nor does it now urge, a permanent closure; it stands for a temporary halt in the deliberate kill by man, to permit natural restoration of an adequate breeding stock. The new regulations only serve to postpone, at incalculable risk, the inevitable halt."



General Wildlife Federation

The setting up of a mechanism whose function will be to inform all persons interested in wildlife conservation and thereby enable them to bring concerted action to bear in its behalf is the object of the General Wildlife Federation, (temporary organization), Washington, D. C.

The plan is to create first: a County Council of the Federation by selecting one representative from each of several groups in the county, such as Sportsmen's Groups, Farm Groups, Audubon Societies, Women's Groups, etc.; second, a State Federation Council composed of the Chairmen of the several county councils; and third, a National Federation Council composed of the Chairmen of the forty-eight State councils.

The following are a few relevant paragraphs from a recent pamphlet issued by the General Wildlife Federation and written by J. N. Darling, Acting President:

"Any Federation that will bring together the numerous wildlife conservation agencies in the interest of a common cause will be invaluable in promoting official legislative and financial recognition of wildlife conservation needs.

"We who believe in more wildlife have been fighting each other too long, or not fighting at all. Certainly we have not been fighting the major agencies of exploitation which have destroyed the environment in which our wildlife species breed and live. Surely the mechanism for unified action among conservationists has been lacking.

"Our own chaos seems to have been used by every agency of government as an excuse for withholding its support.

"We have sent our resolutions to our elected officials of government signed by the President and Secretary of our groups. Occasionally individuals have personally represented us in conference with the Governor.

"At best there have been only a few out of the many supporters who have contacted our government officials in the interest of wildlife conservation.

"Speaking bluntly, our approach has failed to achieve results, and the plain bare fact of the matter is that elected officials pay little attention to committee representation, petitions or resolutions.

"Is it possible to make the voting strength of wildlife conservationists effective? I am sure it is, and without great difficulty, costs or interference with partisan politics. It has been accomplished experimentally in two states and has proved its effectiveness. There are enough wildlife enthusiasts in any county in the United States to affect the most disinterested public official.

"Elected officials of the governments, local, state and national, take their mandates from the opinions of their individual constituents whom they are elected to represent.

"The Federation is to make it possible for the individual to know and act in the major emergencies affecting the entire wildlife restoration field.

"It is not to select someone to represent you in the State or in Washington, and to voice your opinions, *but to do just the opposite, i. e., bring the word to you and let you do the voicing of your own opinions.*

"The success of the new Federation depends wholly on the responsiveness of the *individual*. It will be successful if you use it."



Darling on Audubon Board

Mr. J. N. Darling, of Des Moines, Iowa, cartoonist, widely known as "Ding" and formerly Chief of the Federal Bureau of Biological Survey, has been elected to membership on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Audubon Societies.

"No doubt Mr. Darling will be able, through the agency of the Audubon Association," said John H. Baker, its Executive Director, "further to arouse our people to a realization of the adverse economic effect of continued depletion of our wildlife resources, and the threat of conversion of much of our once rich farming and grazing lands to a desert condition."



August Field Trip was taken under the leadership of Miss Papina on Sunday, the 16th, to Muir Woods and Frank Valley. The weather was perfect except for a rather too brisk wind at the top of the ridge. Starting from Mill Valley, we took the Hiker's trail through Binkley's place, then over the hill and down into Muir Woods, where we ate lunch. In the afternoon we took the road into Frank Valley for a short distance, but not finding many species, no doubt owing to the season, as this locality has all the appearance of good birding country, we turned back and finally took the trail by Joe's place over the hill. Twenty-five species were observed as follows: Turkey Vulture; Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed and Sparrow Hawks; Quail; Anna Hummingbird; Red-shafted Flicker; Black Phoebe; Western Flycatcher; Nicasio Jay; Crow; Chickadee; Bush-tit; Wren-tit; Winter Wren; Western Bluebird; Western Gnatcatcher; Yellow Warbler; English Sparrow; House Finch; Willow and Green-backed Goldfinches; Brown Towhee; Lark Sparrow; Junco.

Members attending: Misses Papina, Stanton; Harold Kirker; Mr. and Mrs. Stephens. Guests: Mrs. Anabel, Mrs. Anne A. Collins of Minneapolis, Minnesota.



The Fall migration has already started as shown by the first records of the season, given by Commander and Mrs. Henry E. Parmenter as follows:

Cliff House rocks: July 15th, Surf-bird 1; Black Turnstones 2, the largest number seen up to August 3rd being 18; July 27th, Ruddy Turnstone 1; 29th, Wandering Tattler 1.

San Mateo Bridge: July 20th, Marbled Godwits 6; Dumbarton Bridge, Northern Phalaropes 100±, 200± 31st; on the 20th, at both bridges Western Willets 100± and Forster Terns 66.

Alvarado: July 20th, Greater Yellow-legs 2; Long-billed Dowitchers 3; Avocets 10; 31st, American Egrets 11; Semipalmated Plover 1; Black-bellied Plover 6; Avocets 7; Pintails in eclipse plumage 100±.

Mountain View marshes: July 9th, Long-billed Curlews 6, and Hudsonian 16, the latter increasing to 77 on the 31st.

Audubon Notes

September Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday, the 10th, at 8 p.m., room 19, Ferry Building.

Former President Brighton C. Cain will speak on "Random Bird Notes," illustrated with motion pictures.

Members may bring guests.



September Field Trip will be taken on Sunday, the 13th, to the shore at Alameda. The tide will be high at 10:23 a. m. and will not be at proper point for observing shore birds at Fernside Beach until late in the day. San Francisco members may take Southern Pacific Alameda Ferry and train at 12:45 to Lincoln Park Station, where the leader will meet them. Those members who wish to come early and scout out the loafing places of these birds may come on the 10:45 boat. East Bay members may take bus at Fourteenth and Broadway, Oakland.



August Meeting: The 228th regular meeting was held on Thursday, the 13th, in room 19, Ferry Building, with twenty-three members and guests present. President Junea W. Kelly presiding.

As speaker of the evening, Mr. James Moffitt gave a very interesting talk on the "Nesting of Canada Geese in California." He stated that this species is a widely ranging bird, nesting farthest south of all the geese. In California they nest from Mono Lake, Lake Tahoe, and Lake Almanor to the Oregon line.

Geese begin nesting very early, usually about the first of March. It is still winter when the courting begins, and the sets are completed before April 1st.

Nesting geese favor sloughs fringed with tules and those adjacent to wild hay meadows, also alkaline lakes.

In Mr. Moffitt's opinion, 1200 pairs of Canada Geese nest in this state every year. The nests are sometimes laid on the bare ground, but matted tules and big haystacks are the favorite nesting sites.

Banding has brought out the fact that the local people were correct in stating that the geese remained all winter and do not migrate, in spite of the contrary opinion of ornithologists.

In 1931-32-33 in Honey Lake Valley Mr. Moffitt banded 119 geese, twenty-three adults and ninety-three young, during the non-flight moulting period.

During the first three shooting seasons there were twenty-four returns, two old birds and the rest young. Twenty-three per cent of the young were shot before they were four years old, and as they do not breed before that age, it is a dangerously high percentage. Banded returns represent only one-half of the birds killed because hunters do not always send in the bands partly from mere neglect and partly from fear that it may result in additional shooting restrictions.

In Mr. Moffitt's opinion, the estimate of 500 Canada Geese killed each year in California is too low. In 1935 there were no returns, a year in which there was only a month of shooting.

Mr. Moffitt also stated that there was a plan under discussion to reimburse farmers for leaving a strip of hay uncut along the sloughs so as not to destroy the nests that might be there. He suggested the purchase of small areas of this sort for nesting waterfowl.

Excellent motion pictures of the geese at Honey Lake were shown.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

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For the Study and the Protection of Birds

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Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Room 19, Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

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Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.